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#### BEHEMOTH

● Loch Ness: A hoax or not a hoax, that is the question. The news that the well known surgeon's photograph of 1934 was hoaxed, and that it does not show a giant pinniped or a surviving plesiosaur was in many papers. However, I have also learned of negative voices, who think it is genuine after all.

In November 1993, a dying Christian Spurling told Nessie researcher Alastair Boyd how he had faked the picture using a modell made of wood, plastic and a toy submarine. The "Nessie" was only 30 cm high and 45 cm long. A lead keel gave it stability. Spurling was the stepson of Marmaduke Wetherell, the big game hunter who, in 1934, undertook an expedition to the loch to identify the creature and who was then fooled by alleged monster spoors which had been made by an umbrella stand. His own hoax, made up by him, built by Christian Spurling and photographed in shallow water by Ian Spurling and ascribed to Colonel Robert Wilson, was a revenge.

The confession was published by Alastair Boyd and David Martin, a zoologist with the Loch Ness and Morar Project. Boyd points out that although the picture is a hoax, he has seen the creature and is still convinced that it exists. Adrian Shine said because there had been "a thousand-odd eyewitnesses" to the monster, so the hunt has to continue. He now limits true sightings to reports of humps, perhaps because they better fit his fish-theory (humps could all be wake effects. The only sightings which indicate that something strange is in the loch are those of head and neck or of whole creatures, but Shine ignores them). Also, both Andreas Trottmann and Rev Dr Gordon Powell, a Nessie witness, have doubted the hoax confession, pointing out a well-known London gynaecologists was not likely to be involved in a hoax, that the hoax theory doesn't explain Wilson's second picture, and that Wilson had always been called Keith or R.K. Wilson.

Regarding all the fuss, comparing the hight of the waves surrounding the alleged monster in the picture, it had been clear for some time that the thing couldn't have been very large. Mackal identified it as a water bird. So the modell size of 45 cm is in keeping with this. I always found the surgeon's picture unimpressive - it simply showed an animal or thing far too small. The modell theory is as likely as the water bird theory, and I leave it to the true believers to find the correct details. I feel, however, that the picture was never and cannot longer be used as evidence for some unknown creature of big size.

My sources are: Herald Sun (Australia), March 18 and 27 (with doubt on hoax confession); Herald Sun, Melbourne, March 14; Daily Mail, March 14; TODAY, March 14; The Times March 14 (these clips all supplied by Andreas Trottmann); The Bangor (Maine) Daily News, March 16, p.19 and New York Times March 20 (both clips from Loren Coleman) and Rheinpfalz, March 14; Mannheimer Morgen, March 14 and Frankfurter Rundschau, March 15, p. 22 (I found them...)

● Loch Ness: Now you see it, now you don't... Just as everybody began to doubt that Nessie exists, a senior engineer from the research ship of the expedition by the Natural History Museum and the Freshwater Biological Association ("Project Urquhart"), Birnie Lees, said the Project hat registered unusual sonar returns on five occasions in 1992 and 1993. On July 28, 1992, at 7pm, they had an echo for two minutes between Foyers and Invermoriston. It resembled a shoal of fish, but there are no large shoals of fish in the Loch. In 1993, there were 4 additional contacts. It was too early to draw conclusions, said Lees, but the contacts merited further investigation. (Inverness Courier, March 25; clip by A. Trottmann)

● Loch Ness miscellany: Inverness wants to house the headquarters of the British national lottery, Inverness District Council said. They thing the town's popularity due to the monster could be a good promotion for a "monster Lottery" (Inverness Courier, March 25; credit: Andreas Trottmann) /// Monster hunters can now take trips into the Loch's depths with a tourist submarine. The sub, which has room for 5 passengers, has increased tourism in the region and is a source for hoteliers, some are quoted in the Inverness Courier, March 29 . Additional reports in the Neue

Bündner Zeitung, March 30 (both clips: A. Trottmann) and in the Leipziger Volksblatt, March 4, and in the Inverness Courier, Feb 25 (credit: A.T.) /// In the Inverness Courier, early Feb 1994, in the 25 years ago section, we find a reprint of F. R. Flint's story how he rammed the Loch Ness Monster in 1943 (credit: Andreas Trottmann).

#### LEVIATHAN

● There are two interesting articles on large unidentified marine creatures in the most recent issue of the INFO Journal. Nr. 70, out in January, has on pp. 7-13, an excellent article by Michel Raynal detailing sightings of whales with two dorsal fins. None are recognised by zoology, but Raynal makes a good case that there are at least two species, one belonging to the Odontocetes (or toothed whales) and one to the Mysticetes (or baleen whales). Also very interesting is Mr X's exposure of the so-called giant turtle seen of New Foundland in 1883 (on pp. 14-15) which he concludes is a fabrication, although the evidence is not as clear as possible. However, no local source could be found for the story which first appeared in New Zealand, and it is very likely that a local Canadian or New England-sea serpent story was transformed into the giant turtle by be New Zealand editor.

#### KRAKEN

● I do not want to explode a news item before it is published by the true discoverer, but I was told that several new photographs have been found of the alleged giant octopus of St Augustine, Florida, that does contain significant clues to its true identity. I hope the pictures will be published soon - if what was announced to me proves to be right, they will be a good day for cryptozoologists and a bad day for sceptics like me...

#### USO

● Lake Champlain: Well, not a USO, but, once again, a UFO-sighting over a monster lake. It is mentioned in Richard L Thompson's "Alien Identities" (Govardhan Hill Publishing: San Diego 1993) on pp. 116-122. I will only briefly summarize it. On August 7, 1968, "Michael" and "Janet" were working at Bluff Ledge Camp, north of Burlington, close to the lake's shore, when they spotted an unusual light, lost time. Years later, they were hypnotised independently and told the same story of a UFO abduction including operation etc. This item could be interesting in view of the "window area" hypothesis, but I suppose there is now no place left in the US without at least one alien abduction encounter...

● A new "net incident" was reported in February. Fishermen to the east of Russia (does that mean the Bering Sea or the Seas north of Russia?) had a gigantic shoal of fish on their sonar, but they netted...a Russian nuclear submarine! (Die Rheinpfalz, 24 Feb)

#### CRYPTOZOLOGY

● The Mapinguary: This monstrous sloth, described in last Bilk, is at the moment hunted by Dr Oren and his expedition in Brasil. I still have to look up the relevant article in the Scientific American, Dec 1993, but further news on the creature and a note on the start of the expedition was in the Ludwigsburger Kreiszeitung, Feb 22, p. 14 and in the Rheinpfalz, Feb 17. Andreas Trottmann has sent me a clip on the giant sloth from the Berner Zeitung, Jan 19. The expedition planned to search the region of Acre in March, we now have mid-April, but I haven't heard of any success at the moment.

● Another South American Yeti: Perhaps related to the whole Mapinguary business is a short note in the Rheinpfalz, March 10. A farmer, it says, has observed a giant ape close to the bank of the Manuripe River in the Bilivian part of the Amazonas Basin. Newspapers from Codija, close to the border of Brasil, report the unknown creature weighed at least 250 kilogrammes and was taller than 2 metres/ 7 ft. The report comes via afp, the French news agenvy.

● Coelacanth news: Ever since Latimeria was discovered in 1938, there have been reports of coelacanths from other regions of the globe. Michel Raynal sent me an article by J R Greenwell from the BBC Wildlife, March 1994, p.33, on the possible discovery of coelacanth scales in Florida and Mexico. Most intriguing of all, however, are at least two silver models, dating back several centuries, and probably from Mexico, that show strange coelacanth-like fish. However, they vary from the South African and Comoran species and may represent an unknown species of this "living fossil".